

REMARKS

I. Status of Claims

Claims 2, 3 and 5-7 are pending in this application, the independent claims being claims 5 and 6. By this Amendment, claims 2, 5 and 6 are amended. Claims 1 and 4 previously were canceled.

II. Summary of Action

In the Action, the specification was objected to on formal grounds; and claims 2, 3 and 5-7 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a), as unpatentable over Applicants' disclosure at page 1, lines 5-20 ("Applicants' acknowledged state of the art") in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,827,592 (Van Gulik). Reconsideration and withdrawal of the objection and rejection respectfully are requested in view of the above amendments and the following remarks.

III. Specification Amendments

The specification has been reviewed and amended to improve its form, including English spelling, grammar, idiom, syntax and the like. In particular, the first paragraph at page 1 has been amended to delete reference to the claims, as requested by the Examiner. No new matter has been added.

IV. Claim Amendments

Without conceding the propriety of the rejection, claims 2, 5 and 6 have been amended more clearly to recite various aspects of the claimed invention. Support for the proposed amendments may be found in the original application. Applicants submit that the amendments merely are formal in nature, and do not narrow the scope of the pending claims. No new matter has been added.

V. Claimed Invention

The present invention relates to a novel parquet strip that forms a part of a parquet element or floor panel, and a method of manufacturing a parquet element or floor panel

including a plurality of parquet strips applied to a support. Each parquet strip of a parquet floor element or floor panel (and not necessarily the parquet floor element or floor panel) includes long sides and narrow (transverse) sides. Each parquet element or floor panel may be provided with a tongue and groove, e.g., on opposing long sides of the parquet element or floor panel. The present invention relates particularly to a treatment of the plurality of individual parquet strips that make up one parquet element or floor panel.

In one aspect, as now recited in independent claim 5, the claimed invention relates to a parquet strip of a parquet element, the parquet strip including two long sides and two narrow sides, and an impregnation applied onto the faces of the narrow sides at least over a part of their elevation.

In this aspect, at least a part of the elevation of each narrow side of each parquet strip of a parquet element is supplied with an impregnation. As discussed in greater detail in the present application, this feature provides a significant improvement in resistance to damage of each individual parquet strip, as well as an assembled parquet element or floor panel including a plurality of such parquet strips, because it reduces moisture damage both at exposed narrow side(s) and cross joints between individual parquet strips at their narrow sides in a parquet element or floor panel.

In another aspect, as now recited in independent claim 6, the claimed invention relates to a method of manufacturing a floor panel, comprising (1) providing a medial or supporting layer onto the area of support of which a stress compensating means can be applied and onto the surface of which a plurality of parquet strips can be applied, and (2) applying an impregnation onto the faces of the narrow sides of each parquet strip at least over a part of their elevation prior to applying the plurality of parquet strips onto the surface of the support layer.

In this aspect, both the narrow (transverse) sides of the parquet strips in the interior of a parquet element or floor panel, and the narrow sides of parquet elements at the perimeter of the parquet element or floor panel have an impregnation applied onto at least a portion of their faces (elevation). As discussed in greater detail in the present application, this feature provides a significant improvement over prior art parquet floor panels, in that each floor panel has improved resistance to damage from moisture/water both around its overall perimeter and at cross joints of the narrow sides of each parquet strip.

VI. Prior Art Distinguished

Applicants submit that the prior art fails to anticipate the present invention. Moreover, Applicants submit that there are differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art, such that the subject matter taken as a whole would not have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made.

The disclosure at page 1, lines 5-20 ('Applicants' acknowledged state of the art') describes a parquet element or floor panel including a plurality of parquet strips applied to a support, where the parquet element includes first and second long sides having a tongue and groove, respectively, and where at least a portion of the faces/elevation of the *long sides* are impregnated. As acknowledged by the Examiner, nowhere does Applicants' acknowledged state of the art describe or suggest providing impregnation of the short (transverse) sides of a parquet element or floor panel, let alone to provide impregnation on at least a portion of *the narrow sides of each parquet strip of a parquet element or floor panel*, as recited in the claims.

The Van Gulik '592 patent relates to a floor element, and was cited for its disclosure of a wood flooring element wherein all edges of the flooring element are coated with a material to prevent moisture penetration. However, Applicants submit that the Van Gulik '592 patent fails to disclose or suggest at least the above described features of the claimed

invention. Rather, the Van Gulik '592 patent describes a *floor element* for covering a base in which a bearing surface consists of a *single* wood fibre board which is covered with a transparent lacquer coating, and is understood merely to disclose that the transparent lacquer coating may be provided on the side edges of the floor element. Nowhere does the Van Gulik '592 patent disclose or suggest a floor element including a plurality of parquet strips applied to a support, where each parquet strip includes long sides and narrow sides, and where at least a portion of the elevation/faces of the narrow sides of each parquet strip are impregnated prior to applying the plurality of parquet strips onto the surface of the support layer, as disclosed and claimed in the present application.

Nor is the Van Gulik '592 patent believed to add anything to Applicants' disclosure of the acknowledged prior art that would make obvious the claimed invention.

For the above reasons, Applicants submit claims 5 and 6 are allowable over the cited art.

Claims 2, 3 and 7 depend from claim 5, and are believed allowable for the same reasons. Moreover, each of these dependent claims recites additional features in combination with the features of base claim 5, and is believed allowable in its own right. Individual consideration of the dependent claims respectfully is requested.

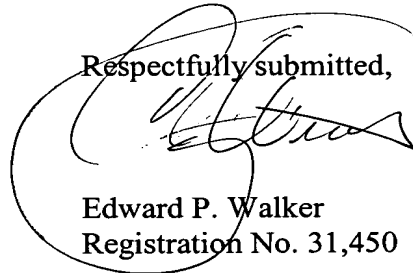
VII. Summary

For the above reasons, Applicants believe claims 2, 3 and 5-7 are in condition for allowance. Favorable consideration of the claims and passage to issue of the subject application at the Examiner's earliest convenience earnestly are solicited.

Applicants believe the present Amendment is responsive to each of the points raised by the Examiner in the Office Action, and submit that the application is in condition for allowance.

Should the Examiner believe that anything further would be desirable in order to place this application in even better condition for allowance, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the telephone number set forth below.

Respectfully submitted,



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